

Clinton sees Taj 'marble cancer,' grants aid

BY BINDU JACOB

Agra, March 22: US President Bill Clinton on Wednesday tried to calm apprehensions of Third World countries that the developed nations were trying to block their development by introducing environmental restrictions.

Mr Clinton, during his green lecture at Taj Khema, said: "We will never ask any developing nation to put a stop to its economic growth due to environmental considerations."

"The developing countries should not make the same mistake as those made by the developed countries, as there are technologies now available which can ensure environmental protection coupled with econom-

ic growth," he added.

Mr Clinton also announced aid worth \$45 million for a clean environment project and a loan of \$200 million to India with the import-export backup of the US, to ensure sustained environmental growth.

Mr Clinton arrived in Agra on Wednesday afternoon amidst tight security and landed at Kheri airport, about 20 km from Taj Mahal.

Accompanied by his daughter Chelsea, Mr Clinton spent almost two hours at Taj Mahal before proceeding to Taj Khema.

There was near curfew in Agra for a couple of hours, especially in the Paschami Gate area of the Taj Mahal, from where Mr Clinton and his entourage was to enter the Taj complex. Earlier in the day, the area around the Taj Mahal and Taj Khema was surround-

ed by the Uttar Pradesh police.

At the Taj Khema, he was welcomed by external affairs minister Jaswant Singh, UP chief minister Ram Prakash Gupta and environmentalist Vir Bhandr Mishra.

In his address, Mr Clinton reiterated the need for a global effort to ensure environmental protection and said: "The protection of the environment is not a country-specific problem, but it crosses all known national boundaries. It is a global problem which requires a global solution."

Speaking about the effects pollution on the Taj Mahal, Mr Clinton said: "If pollution has done this to marble," which he called marble cancer, "What would it do to our children?"

He laid emphasis on the need to protect the Taj Mahal and the Ganga from pollution.

Appreciating the Indian tradition of worshipping water and soil, he said: "We have to learn to sustain a workable harmony with nature to ensure that we ensure a healthy environment."

Mr Clinton warned India not to succumb to pressure for development at the cost of the environment.

He also said, "While the developing nations were harming the environment most, it is India's geographic position which was hurting it most." Mr Clinton warned of the ill-effects of environment degradation and said, "Environmental degradation leads to storms, droughts, malaria due to increased mosquito growth, destruction of crop plant and increase in sea level due to global warming."

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'Eco statement furthers U.S. interests'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 24. Leading environment organisations in the city are skeptical about the consequences of the joint statement on cooperation in energy and environment, signed between India and the U.S. in the presence of the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, in April two days ago.

These groups fear that the U.S. Government is using energy projects to break the Indian resistance to emission trading, without entitlement and property rights to atmosphere. While the Government has staved off pressure so far, it is felt that the next eight months would be the real test of fire because November 2,000 is the deadline for framing rules and modalities for Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) at the sixth Conference of Parties in the Hague. And the U.S. is keen that India accepts the CDM on existing terms before that.

Even before the joint statement was signed, the Tata Energy Research Institute had warned that

"President Clinton's climate change agenda is obvious and furthers the interests of his country."

Today, another leading group — the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) — explained in detail how the joint statement "is a product of immense pressure on Indian Government." The language, they pointed out, where it states that "the two countries intend to work together and with other countries in appropriate multilateral fora toward early agreement on the elements of the Kyoto Protocol (KP), including Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)", was reflective of "intensive politics and growing pressure".

The whole issue of making the KP effective hinges on either the U.S. or Russia ratifying the Protocol. But the U.S. Senate has passed a resolution demanding meaningful participation from key developing countries (India, China, Brazil) as an absolute prerequisite to its signing the Protocol. It basically wants India and

countries of the South to accept the CDM on American terms, giving up talk of equity. On the other hand, the G-77 countries led by India view CDM as "an unfair mechanism" because it is a project-based emission trading, yielding only unilateral benefits to the U.S.

The U.S. — the largest emitter of Green House Gases (GHG) in the world and contributor to the climate change problem — is required to bring its emission levels down by six per cent between 2008-2012. But since the developed countries like the U.S. in particular, find it impossible to delink carbon emissions and economic growth, they are totally disinclined towards taking any domestic action. Instead, the U.S. wants to initiate action in developing countries by taking away their low-cost technology and leaving no least-cost options when it is their turn to take on emission-reduction targets on their own in the future.

At present, per capita GHG emissions of developing countries

are still low. For instance as mirrored by respective GDPs, the GHG emissions of one American citizen in 1996 was equal to those of 19 Indians, 107 Bangladeshis, 134 Bhutanese, 269 Nepalis, 30 Pakistanis and 49 Sri Lankans.

Addressing the media, Ms. Sunita Narain and Ms. Anju Sharma of the CSE warned that for every clean energy project with the U.S., India could end up paying with its future rights to development. For instance, if a power plant costs Rs. 100 crores, the U.S. will bear the incremental cost of Rs. two to ten crores to make it more efficient. But India will have to buy Rs. 90-98 crores worth American technology and when India's emission is reduced, U.S. will take credit for it under the KP.

Though the countries of the South have unanimously opposed the Protocol in the present form, it is important for them to unitedly reject CDM until equal per capita entitlements and property right to atmosphere is accepted by the North. Or else, it will remain a mechanism of coop-

eration, which benefits the U.S. the most.

According to the CSE members, with active support of business groups and political and diplomatic pressure, the U.S. is making a concerted effort to make India accept CDM on a bilateral basis. The joint statement on energy and environment is a part of this, which had been the hidden agenda of not only Mr. Clinton's visit but also the earlier visits of the Environment Advisor to White House, Ms. Catherine McGuinty, and the U.S. Secretary of Energy, Mr. Bill Richardson.

"Though so far India put preconditions to CDM by demanding entitlement rights to trading, immense intervention from civil society is needed. Or else by taking more aid and soft loans for energy projects, we may not only erode our credibility to G-77 but also give away our future by signing away our rights to CDM," Ms. Narain asserted, adding that CDM should be both ecological and economic-effective, benefitting nations equitably.

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Will Clinton get 'floored'?

From Page 1

According to those in the know, the BSE's old trading floor was chosen because it is the largest such hall in that part of town, much larger than those offered by hotels in the nearby area for instance. The floor is being brightly lit up by a slew of energy efficient compact fluorescent lamps designed to bring the old world glory of the open outcry system floor to life.

Ms Mehta told ET that the trading hall could accommodate between 700-750 people. "We are renovating the lifts, trading floor and the passages and we feel honoured that Mr Clinton has consented to grace the BSE," she said.

Strangely, the BSE which is spending a sum of nearly Rs 50 lakh on the decking up including carpeting the entire trading floor, is not going to charge the mighty greenback king anything. Now that's laying out the carpet quite literally for the first citizen of the USA.

When asked how the gratis from a third world country would be funded, Ms Mehta said it would be out of the retained earnings of the BSE. Maybe the BSE should consider going public like the Nasdaq. Other exchange offices at the top-most floors of the BSE are being refashioned at a feverish pace by carpenters planing the fine polished teakwood as dinner is served and before the bridegroom arrives.

Clinton pledges \$295m for clean-up in India, S Asia

Prajnan Bhattacharya

AGRA 22 MARCH

VOICING CONCERN over global warming and other environmental hazards, Big B Clinton pledged \$295 million for India and its South Asian neighbours to help restore the nature's elements to their pristine glory.

That promise came when the US President addressed a gathering at the signing of a joint statement on co-operation in energy and environment by external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and secretary of state Madeleine Albright in the city of the Taj today.

"The United States has a great responsibility in helping developing nations and, particularly India, in their fight for the cause of environment," he said, adding the US-AID would give \$45 million for efficient energy programme in India, while another \$50 million would go to other environmental projects to secure clean air, clear water and clean energy. The Import-Export Bank of America would pump another \$200 million for technical support to change the climate of the South Asia, the Prez assured. Speaking from the premises with the Taj as the back-

drop the President called upon the people to work together to preserve the world for coming generations. "We can serve better the world by preserving environment for clean water, air and energy, which will be a monument of love from us to our coming generations, like Taj Mahal, a memorable monument for us by our ancestors," he said.

"The US will never ask developing nations to drop economic development for the cause of environment, but now we do not have choice between development and environment," he said adding, "never give up economic development for environment, but this should not be at the cost of the environment." The President said the developed countries were already facing the problems of hurting nature and the result was acid rains, breathing problems, and a tremendous pressure on the environment, even as he praised India for its traditional divine ways to promote nature and environment.

"There is a need to restore nature and the Indian method is the best to do that as it is being done by Prof Veda Bhadra Mishra of Varanasi," Clinton said, reminding the world of the responsibility towards India.

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Hero No 1 came, saw and was conquered

By Mohit Dubey and Siddharth Varadarajan
The Times of India News Service

AGRA: At last, the world's Tourist No 1 can say "been there, done that" when the guys back home talk about the Taj. Moving along with a vast retinue of officials and security personnel, President Bill Clinton swept in and out of Agra, spending nearly two hours at the Taj Mahal before giving a motherhood and apple-pie lecture to a small gathering at the nearby Taj Khema hotel on the virtues of a clean environment.

The UP state administration did a marvelous job cleaning up the approach roads to the Taj Mahal and beautifying the monument for President Clinton but forgot one crucial detail: the multicoloured underpants and wet towels hanging impudently from the Saheli Burj just outside the main gate. The offending undergarments — which are apparently on display every day — belong to the policemen who have been billeted here for years, ever since some bright spark in the government decided terrorists might attack the Taj. "They've painted and scrubbed everything," complained one shopkeeper. "I don't

know how they forgot about the *kachchas*."

With the administration taking no chances, Agra was turned into a virtual ghost town. An ageing *jamadar* from the collectorate, resplendent in a starched white uniform, said that in all his years he had never seen so much fuss over a visitor. "When Bulganin came some 40 years ago, the whole place was spruced up. *Par us time bhi itna nahin hua tha*." Did he think it was overkill? "*Ho sakta hai sahab lekin kya karen. Clinton to world ka adhyaksh hai*. (What can we do? Clinton is the chairman of the world)."

ASI officials told *The Times of India* that unlike other celebrity visitors, Clinton was as moved by the environmental damage the Taj has suffered as by the marble monument's beauty. Seemingly oblivious to the well-publicised marital difficulties the US president has been experiencing, UP chief minister Ram Prakash Gupta told Clinton, "The Taj is a symbol of eternal love. I wish Hillary had come with you." At the function, Clinton, departing from his prepared text to speak extempore, urged India to pay more attention to the problem of global warming. "We don't have to choose be-

tween economic growth and environmental protection," he said. "The US won't ask India to give up growth in order to reduce its emission of greenhouse gases... But we should try and realise the aims of the Kyoto Protocol."

In his speech, Clinton kept referring to the Taj as a metaphor for the environment and spoke of the damage the monument has suffered as "marble cancer". His ending, however, was pure kitsch. "Taj is a monument built in love. All important monuments are built for love The most important monument we can leave for our children is the earth."

No sooner had he finished his speech than a song from the film *Hero No 1* blared over the PA system. Clinton came down from the stage and met an assortment of celebrities who had come in to Agra for the day, obviously out of concern for the environment. Then, to the accompaniment of "*Tu mera tu mera tu mera tu mera tu mera tu mera Hero No. 1*", the presidential motorcade swept out, leaving the audience wondering about whether it was UP chief minister Ram Prakash Gupta or External Affairs minister Jaswant Singh who had chosen the music.

Neither, it was Naeel Boxer!

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Has India got a raw environment deal? 3/25

By Chandrika Mago

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Has the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases that propel global warming managed to extract more than a fair share of commitments from India on the energy and environment fronts?

The Union government doesn't seem to think so but environmentalists do, believing the Vajpayee government may have thrown caution to the winds in its eagerness to accommodate US president Clinton.

The Indo-US statement on cooperation in energy and environment includes specifics on what India "intends" to achieve — a 10 per cent share for renewable energy in electricity capacity additions by 2012 and a 15 per cent improvement in energy efficiency by 2007-08. In contrast, the only targets the US was willing to write into the agreement were those it is already committed to achieving.

Union power minister P R Kuramangalam, whose ministry cleared the agreement, feels the targets for India are achievable, but Tata Energy Research Institute director R K Pachauri isn't as certain. Says Pachauri: "I am not sure the Indian government has thought through the institutional changes needed to fulfil the commitments. There are too many ministries involved and, going by past experience, it will be difficult to coordinate

all of them."

The Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) sees in the statement a shift in India's policy towards the clean development mechanism (CDM), which would allow industrialised countries to fund projects in developing nations to gain emission reduction credits while enabling development. CSE fears India may end up accepting the inequitable CDM when the issue comes up for discussion later this year.

Negotiations on climate change have been long-drawn. The US, which set specific emission reduction targets under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, wants key developing countries like India and China to show 'meaningful participation' before it ratifies the Protocol.

As for the money Clinton is promising India to curb greenhouse gas emissions, CSE says the US can "sell technology and fulfil its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, without so much as lifting a finger at home". "The burden of climate change mitigation will land on poor countries while the actual culprits would have got away cheaply."

Ambuj Sagar, a Harvard-based researcher currently at TERI, argues that India should insist on a fair allocation of the "atmospheric commons".

(With inputs from Siddharth Varadarajan and Dilip Rangachari)

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